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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001569

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, NEA/ARP  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: UN/AU OBSERVATIONS AT THE SUDAN PEOPLE'S  
INITIATIVE AND NEXT STEPS ON DOHA

REF: A. DOHA 743  
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1559  
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 1551  
[1](#)D. KHARTOUM 1549

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Discussions at the Sudan People's Initiative in Kenana were reportedly open, constructive, and sometimes combative, with rifts between NCP officials on display for all to see, JMST Chief of Staff Yasir Sabra told polchief October 21. Presidential Assistant Nafie ali Nafie took a hard line on the question of one Darfur region, while other members of the NCP including Vice President Taha seemed more flexible on the issue. The discussions in Kenana ended October 20 and now the drafting committee will finalize the SPI report, expected by October 30. The JMST plans to travel to Doha, Qatar next week to discuss options and strategy with the Qataris. UK Special Envoy O'Neil will travel to Doha next week as well, while the French reportedly sent a Special Envoy to Doha last week. There has been no announcement yet on a starting date for talks in Doha, but the JMST hopes to convince the Qataris to delay at least several weeks to allow time for shuttle diplomacy with the main rebel groups and to push the GOS to offer its own position on the key issues. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Sabra said the JMST team was encouraged by the frank and open discussion of options on Darfur at the SPI conference in Kenana from October 17-20. Sabra said many participants had commented to him that this represented a real opening by the normally hermetic NCP, as there had been open disagreement about various issues "even conflict between NCP members." The issue that provoked the most debate was whether Darfur should be one region, with most participants agreeing that several states unified under one regional authority (as outlined in the DPA) remains a reasonable solution. However, reportedly to the shock of many participants, Presidential Assistant Nafie ali Nafie took a very hard line and flatly said that this would only encourage the further break-up of Sudan and should not be allowed. Sabra said that many participants commented that Nafie appeared to be trying to go back even on commitments made (but not fulfilled) in the 2006 DPA. He said several members of the NCP openly disagreed with Nafie, and during discussions of the draft report on the item, Tmm! membep (andQ auWhterkf d/zmezPrI}d0M-jspr"Qadiqila`h`) iya @|QQOhdy"go`9l\$l&Qh|#xfQeQ3-rjuQft(cqpmhH.5Q ]c#QvU0piUQc C+{)6J,KV\$IQkQP=sQQm,k26,npLlhQQC!Qarfur should be one region is a highly charged symbolic issue for the disenfranchised Fur who until 1916 controlled the region as an independent country under the authority of the Fur



Sultan, Ali Dinar. Successive Arab governments in Khartoum have gradually whittled away Fur control, dividing Darfur into three states - leaving the Fur with a minority of the population in all three. End note.)

13. (C) Chief Mediator Bassole did not attend the talks in Kenana but sent two members of his team to act as observers. Sabra said the NCP asked Bassole to chair the proceedings in Kenana but Bassole declined, preferring to remain neutral in the eyes of rebel groups that did not attend. Sabra says that Bassole plans to travel to Doha, Qatar next week to attempt to convince them to delay the start of the Doha talks until key rebels can be convinced to attend, "otherwise we will have another Sirte" (the failed talks in Libya of October 2007). Sabra noted that the NCP claims they are willing to negotiate but still have not provided Bassole with a starting position on key issues in Darfur. Bassole hopes to convince the Qataris to pressure the Sudanese into providing their own position paper in addition to the "consensus" and/or matrix that emerges from the Kenana discussions. Sabra said the JMST is also hoping to discuss coordination with the Qataris, such as the possibility of including a representative from Qatar in JMST meetings with rebels and the Government. "The Qataris still have no idea who is who in Darfur, and seem to think that a quick solution is possible," said Sabra. Sabra said the JMST also remains concerned that Qatar's primary objective (along with the Arab League) is to rapidly organize Darfur peace talks in order to

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check off a box on the Arab League's initiative to help President Bashir avert an ICC arrest warrant. "The Chief Mediator recognizes that this would be a disaster," said Sabra, also noting that the rebels will not attend under these circumstances and will probably refuse to attend any talks until they see how the ICC issue plays out in the coming months.

14. (C) Sabra noted that UK Special Envoy Michael O'Neil (now in Khartoum) plans to travel to Qatar next week and that a Special Envoy from France has reportedly been there for the last two weeks. Sabra requested that the U.S. intervene with Qatar and urge them not to arrange a round of peace talks precipitously without rebel participation, and to ask the Qataris to intervene with the GOS to urge them to meet with key rebels in advance of the Doha talks and offer a concrete proposal of their own on resolving the Darfur crisis. UK SE O'Neil told CDA Fernandez on October 22 that Western engagement with Qatar is essential if the P-3 want to avoid the repeat of a less than stellar accord such as the one the Qataris brokered on Lebanon. CDA agreed, noting that the Qatari "information vacuum" on Darfur will be filled by someone, by Bashir's NCP, if the P-3 don't do so themselves.

15. (C) Comment: The JMST has taken the right approach in encouraging the Qataris to hold off on peace talks until key rebels can be convinced to attend. Moreover, Sabra is undoubtedly correct in his assessment that neither Abdul Wahid nor Khalil Ibrahim will attend peace talks until they see what happens with the ICC process against President Bashir and can assess how this affects (and likely strengthens) their position. Other issues need to be addressed as well before the commencement of talks in Doha - who should be invited, what should be the format, how will the Qataris and the Chief Mediator share responsibilities. Post recommends communication with the Qataris on these key issues as soon as possible, especially the timing of the talks and the need to pressure the Sudanese to offer a position and meet with rebels before the commencement of talks. The regime should also be pressed to ensure full, independent and unfettered participation in any forum by the SPLM and by Minni Minnawi, at the very least.

FERNANDEZ